

Washington National Forest Stakeholder Collaborative, ultimately succeeded and made joint recommendations to the U.S. Forest Service for forest management and protection. Preservation advocates consented to timber harvesting and other active forest restoration and management in certain areas, while forest products interests consented to wilderness and light management in other areas. Following this fruitful collaboration, the Forest Service convened the Lower Cowpasture Restoration and Management Project, bringing together the collaborative and other stakeholders to help develop management activities on this particular part of GW Forest in Bath County. Everyone got some of what they wanted, and everyone gave some ground.

The collaborative has now come together to support the wilderness additions in this bill, which designates 4,600 acres to be added to the Rich Hole Wilderness Area and 1,000 acres to be added to the Rough Mountain Wilderness Area. I am proud to once again partner with Senator MARK WARNER and follow the path blazed by Senator John Warner and Representative Rick Boucher, who led the original Virginia Wilderness Act in 1984. I am also proud that this bill has passed the Senate in previous Congresses, including by unanimous consent. I will be pushing to include this bill as part of the 2023 farm bill, and I hope that we can bring this effort to the finish line soon.

Taking care of our Nation's public lands is good for the environment and good for the economy. Land disputes may often be contentious, but these efforts in the GW Forest show they don't have to be. When everyone comes to the table and invests the necessary time, we can find common ground. I hope this will be a lesson for us in other tough policy challenges, and I encourage my Senate colleagues to support this bill.

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KING, and Mrs. SHAHEEN):

S. 747. A bill to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to provide grants to States, territories, and Indian Tribes to address contamination by perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances on farms, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I rise today to introduce the Relief for Farmers Hit with PFAS Act. My colleague Senator KING joins me in introducing this important legislation that would assist farmers across America who have been harmed by PFAS contamination.

PFAS are a class of man-made chemicals—sometimes referred to as “forever chemicals”—that can bioaccumulate in bodies over time. They are traditionally found in nonstick pans, clothing, furniture, and fire-fighting foam and have been linked to cancer, thyroid disease, liver damage,

decreased fertility, and hormone disruption. PFAS contamination is a growing problem, and additional resources are needed to support affected communities.

In Maine, PFAS contamination affecting many different sectors, including agriculture, has been discovered over the past several years. The presence of PFAS in wastewater sludge once spread as fertilizer has prevented some Maine farms from selling their products, thus leading to significant financial hardship for these family farmers. One such farmer is Fred Stone, a dairy farmer in Arundel, ME. In 2016, Fred discovered that the milk produced on his farm contained some of the highest levels ever reported for a PFAS contaminant at that time. More recently, a dairy farm in Fairfield, ME, found PFAS levels in its milk that were 153 times higher than the State's standard.

Dairy is not the only agricultural sector affected by these harmful forever chemicals. Adam Nordell and his wife Johanna Davis, from Unity, ME, learned that PFAS had contaminated the soil and water in their organic vegetable farm, the result of sludge spread on their land in the 1990s. Tests last year showed that Adam and Johanna had levels of PFAS in their blood that were even higher than chemical plant workers who manufactured PFAS for decades and handled them daily.

Currently, USDA provides limited support through the Dairy Indemnity Payment Program to dairy farmers who have been directed to remove their contaminated milk from the commercial market. This program falls far short of meeting the growing needs of all farmers in the State of Maine. Fred Stone, the farmer who first learned of contamination in 2016, has still not been compensated adequately for the contamination he has experienced. What is more, this program helps only dairy farmers, excluding the farmers of other agricultural products who have had their livelihoods disrupted by PFAS contamination. While community organizations and the State of Maine have stepped in to provide some aid, USDA should do more to assist all farmers affected by these chemicals. That is what our legislation aims to do.

Specifically, the funds authorized by the Relief for Farmers Hit with PFAS Act could be used for a variety of purposes at the State level, including providing financial assistance to affected farmers; building capacity for PFAS testing for soil or water sources; monitoring blood for individuals to make informed decisions about their health; upgrading or purchasing equipment to ensure a farm remains profitable during or after known PFAS contamination; developing alternative production systems or remediation strategies; developing educational programs for farmers experiencing PFAS contamination; and researching soil and water remediation systems, and the viability of those systems for farms.

In addition to making new resources available, our bill would create a task force at USDA charged with identifying other USDA programs to which PFAS contamination should be added as a activity. This would help bring even more resources to farmers through existing programs. Additionally, the task force would provide technical assistance to States to help them coordinate their responses effectively.

Mr. President, USDA needs to step up and provide support to farmers, who through no fault of their own are at risk of losing their livelihoods. This is not just a problem in Maine. A recent report released by the Environmental Working Group estimated that approximately 20 million acres of crop land in the United States could be contaminated from PFAS-tainted sludge, which had been used as fertilizer.

Thus far, the Federal Government's response has failed to keep pace with this growing problem. I have urged USDA Secretary Vilsack repeatedly to come to the aid of these affected farmers, and the Relief for Farmers Hit with PFAS Act would direct the Department to help where it is needed most.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill. As the members of the Senate Agriculture Committee begin work on the 2023 farm bill, I hope that we can work together to pass the Relief for Farmers Hit with PFAS Act into law.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 101—DESIGNATING MARCH 9, 2023, AS “NATIONAL SLAM THE SCAM DAY” TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT PERVASIVE GOVERNMENT IMPOSTER SCAMS, AND TO PROMOTE EDUCATION TO PREVENT GOVERNMENT IMPOSTER SCAMS

Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Mr. KELLY, Mr. WARNOCK, Mr. CASEY, and Mr. BRAUN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 101

Whereas hundreds of thousands of individuals in the United States are targeted by government imposter scams each year, including Social Security-related and Internal Revenue Service-related government imposter scams;

Whereas government imposter scams involve scammers contacting individuals in the United States and impersonating employees of government agencies, such as the Social Security Administration, to demand payment or personal information, which defrauds individuals of the United States and erodes trust in the government agencies that the scammers impersonate;

Whereas, since 2013, the fraud hotline of the Special Committee on Aging of the Senate has received more than 10,000 complaints from individuals in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, of which ⅓ were reporting possible government imposter scams;

Whereas there were more than 191,000 government imposter scams reported to the Federal Trade Commission in 2022;